2003 discharge: EC general budget, Council

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PURPOSE : to present the revenue and expenditure account and the balance sheet concerning the activities of the budget for the financial year 2003 (Council).

CONTENT : this document sets out the amount of expenditure and the balance sheet for the other institutions of the Union (except the Commission) for the financial year 2003, in particular, the Council.

The document highlights that the 2003 Council's budget amounted to EUR 431 673 000, committed to an amount of EUR 428 845 188, that is a 99.34% rate of utilisation.

The payments made on the committed appropriations amount to EUR 361 199 521.

The year 2003 was framed in the context of the adaptation of the financial management of the Council in accordance with the demands of the new Financial Regulation. It was also marked by the preliminary enlargement commitments, the acquisition of the new LEX 2000 building, the organisation of several European Summits in Brussels and the outsourcing of the Council's restaurants and cafeterias from 01.01.2003.

Other salient issues from the implementation of the 2003 budget are as follows:

- preliminary commitments for enlargement: concerning human resources, expenditure associated with the acquisition of the Council buildings;

- staff expenses : the carry over of appropriations (EUR 3 million) was needed considering the over-estimation of necessary amounts and/or the non-utilisation of appropriations. These amounts concern in particular the costs linked to the Special Representatives of the Union;

- operating expenses : this sector was also subject to an important carry over of appropriations to the year 2004 due to work being carried out on buildings which started in 2003 and which will be finished in 2004 (EUR 12 million); the rate of payment instalments for the LEX 2000 building from the 2003 budget (EUR 15.9 million); IT projects still being carried out (EUR 8.5 million); invoices from the DG SCIC for 2003 (EUR 2.5 million);

- expenses resulting from the missions carried out by the Council : such as those associated with the CFSP and seconded national experts. It appeared that the amounts initially foreseen for the military experts were overestimated and therefore were not spent throughout 2003. Moreover, a number of missions initially foreseen were cancelled or carried over which reduced the actual amounts initially provided. On the other hand, amounts provided for the activities annexed to certain experts were strengthened in order to establish the Joint Situation Centre of the EU (the amounts necessary were found via appropriation transfers between posts and budget lines).